

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE Acquisition Career Management Program

Career Paths

The Department of Commerce has identified the critical skills and career paths for the contracting services to assist contract specialists in planning career development activities and setting goals for accomplishing the necessary training. The career paths consists of three levels and are key to developing an acquisition workforce that truly is the Business Leader and ensuring that the Department of Commerce acquisition workforce is prepared for the future. The career path identifies the requirements for employment, progression, and advancement to the most senior positions in the contracting field through a standardized, consistent, and top quality education and training program and required experience and job assignments. The pathways are intended to develop an acquisition workforce that is highly experienced and well trained and one that is poised to meet the acquisition and management challenges that are presented.

- [Level I - Entry Level: GS-1102-5 through -7](#)
- [Level II - Intermediate Level: GS-1102-9 through -12](#)
- [Level III - Advanced Level: GS-1102-13 and above](#)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE Acquisition Career Management Program

Level I–Entry Level GS-1102-5 through -7

Critical Skills

The entry level in the career path is designed to establish basic competency in the acquisition field. Activities that build this critical skill set include:

- Analyze procurement requests to determine adequacy of documents, propriety of requirement, and most appropriate method of procurement.
- Prepare necessary justifications for negotiated procurements. Review justifications for non-competitive procurements and coordinate with the source for selection of source lists in competitive procurements.
- Develop procurement plans by reviewing previous history, market conditions, and specifications or technical data packages. Determine adequacy and completeness of description, which involves research of various manuals and catalogs, or discussions with manufacturers representatives or requisitioning sources to identify and initiate any corrective actions required.

- Prepare procurement documents and solicitations. Prepare Requests for Proposals (RFP) ensuring that all applicable documents are incorporated. Obtain the required coordination and approval; distribute to industry.
- Evaluate proposals for compliance with terms and conditions and applicable clauses.
- Evaluate proposals received from industry for responsiveness, making price analyses, obtaining technical coordination where required, determine responsibility of contractors and make recommendation for award of contracts after due consideration of all factors involved.
- Participate in negotiations with contractors selected for consideration based on proposals received; coordinate cost and pricing analyses; prepare summary of negotiations setting forth the events and occurrences leading to ultimate and mutual agreement on technical, financial, and overall contractual terms; and make recommendations for award of contracts.
- Ensure proper preparation of contractual documents; obtain all required reviews, approvals, and signatures.
- Prepare summaries of negotiations, contracts and supporting files for review and approval.

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Level I–Entry Level GS-1102-5 through -7

Career Path

Education Required:

A 4-year course of study leading to a bachelor's degree or at least 24 semester hours in any combination of the following fields: accounting, business, finance, law, contracts, purchasing, economics, industrial management, marketing, quantitative methods, or organization and management.

Objective:

To provide recommended core courses and other developmental activities for entry level career professionals. Training and development courses, assignments, and voluntary activities should be documented in an individual development plan (IDP) using short term goals of 1 year and long term goals of up to 5 years (to be determined by employee and supervisor).

Training:

Mandatory Courses:

Fundamentals of Contracting (CON 101)

Fundamentals of Principles of Contract Pricing (CON 104)

Optional Specialized Courses--one or equivalent:

- Simplified Acquisition (CON 237)
- GSA Federal Supply Schedules/Multiple Award Task/Delivery Orders
- Government-wide Commercial Purchase Card
- Construction Contracting Fundamentals

Additional courses for consideration:

- Related college business courses
- Customer focus
- Writing skills
- Computer applications
- Interpersonal communication skills
- Project management
- Presentation skills
- Teambuilding

On-the-Job Training Activities:

- Prepare and process Purchase/Delivery Orders
- Formulate a Simplified Acquisition and appropriate documentation
- Familiarization with DOC orientation (organizational charts, types of goods and services acquired for customers, roles and responsibilities)
- Knowledge of internal office operations
- Knowledge of staff offices within DOC (Office of General Counsel, Finance, Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization, Office of Inspector General) and how these offices interact with the acquisition office

Rotational Assignments:

- Internal and external work assignments
- Serve on acquisition project teams
- Conduct special projects/reports

Other Recommended Activities (Voluntary):

- Become a member of a professional development organization, for example, National Contract Managers Association, National Association of Purchasing Management, Toastmasters Club, etc.
- Subscribe to professional magazines and newsletters or screen Internet
- Seek a role model or mentor in or outside of the organization

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Level II--Intermediate Level
GS-1102-9 through -12

Critical Skills

The intermediate level in the career path is designed to establish a specialized competency in the acquisition field. Activities that build this critical skill set include:

- Review procurement request packages for completeness and conformity with Federal and Department of Commerce procurement regulations and procedures. This includes taking all actions necessary to make fundamentally sound but deficient procurement requests acceptable for procurement action or returning fundamentally unsound procurement requests to initiating offices with appropriate explanation or correction instructions.
- Review for overall soundness the evaluation and selection decisions for actions resulting from unsolicited proposals. Identify procedural and documentation deficiencies and irregularities, and, with the concurrence of appropriate management, continue or discontinue the proposed procurement or find alternate procurement strategies.
- Determine the appropriate procurement instrument type and pricing structure (including all cost-type and fixed-price arrangements), and all general and special clauses, preaward representations and certifications.
- Analyze cost proposals; structured fee, when necessary.
- Conduct negotiations, making all trade-offs necessary to arrive at reasonable estimated costs or prices (or discontinuing negotiations if the situation warrants) and preparing all necessary pre-negotiation positions, spreadsheets, and post-negotiation summaries.
- Perform all actions required to effectively administer the assigned contracts. This includes overseeing the activities of the cognizant agency technical representatives, analyzing performance, cost, property and other reports, resolving claims and disputes, and approving overtime, travel, and equipment purchases.
- Perform all actions necessary to partially or totally terminate contracts, both for the convenience of the Government and for default. This includes preparing all necessary documentation and performing all analyses and negotiations required for same.
- Perform all steps necessary to close contracts. This includes analyzing all reports, final vouchers, audits and releases, negotiating indirect cost rates, and making all property title, transfer, and disposition determinations.
- Ensure that timely and accurate procurement data are entered and validated in all appropriate systems for all assigned actions.

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Level II–Intermediate Level
GS-1102-9 through -12

Career Path

Education Required:

A 4-year course of study leading to a bachelor's degree or at least 24 semester hours in any combination of the following fields: accounting, business, finance, law, contracts,

purchasing, economics, industrial management, marketing, quantitative methods, or organization and management.

Objective:

To introduce additional acquisition activities and related training for more complex acquisition work assignments in developing the career professional. Training and development courses, assignments, and voluntary activities should be documented in an individual development plan (IDP) using short term goals of 1 year and long term goals of up to 5 years (to be determined by employee and supervisor).

Training:

Mandatory Courses:

Intermediate Contracting (CON 202)
Intermediate Contract Pricing (CON 204)
Government Contract Law (CON 210)
Management for Contracting Supervisors (CON 333)

Optional Specialized Courses--one or equivalent:

Performance Based Contracting
Performance Measures
Best Value Procurement
Acquisition of Commercial Items
Oral Presentations

Additional courses for consideration:

Related college business courses
Leadership and teambuilding
Writing skills
Computer applications
Project management
Presentation skills
Decision-making
Managing change
Customer Focus
Alternative Dispute Resolution

On-the-Job Training Activities:

(On-the-job training in the area of acquisition will be determined by supervisor and annotated in IDP)

Rotational Assignments:

Internal and external work assignments
Serve as advisor or participant on acquisition project teams or cross-functional teams
Conduct special projects/reports/surveys

Other Recommended Activities (Voluntary):

Become a member of a professional organization, for example, National Contract Management Association, National Association of Purchasing Management, Toastmasters Club, etc.
Subscribe to professional magazines and newsletters or screen Internet
Serve as a mentor or role model to others in the acquisition workforce
Attend conferences, seminars and symposiums
Write articles on acquisition topics for office newsletters or professional organizations

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Level III–Advanced Level
GS-1102-13 and above

Critical Skills

The advanced level in the career path is designed to establish in-depth knowledge and broad experience in the acquisition field. Activities that build the critical skill set associated with this level include:

- Plan acquisitions and determine acquisition strategies. Conduct analyses of requirements. Coordinate and advise senior level program office personnel on the submittal of procurement documents such as specifications and statements of work, in-house cost estimates, Government versus contractor performance analyses, justifications for other than full and open competition (JOFOC), information technology (IT) requirements analyses and acquisition plans, source lists, and offer evaluation plans. Coordinate and participate in the re-writing of statements of work and specifications.
- Review proposed non-competitive procurements to determine validity of source selection and either recommend conversion to competitive procurement or take action to assure that a satisfactory JOFOC is prepared, coordinated, and approved.
- Develop individual procurement strategies and prepare solicitations. Determine methods of acquisition, contract type, and create the request for proposal/quotations or invitation for bids. Prepare, obtain reviews and approvals for, and issue procurement plans, wage determination requests, IT agency procurement requests, and all other pre-solicitation and solicitation documents. Issue and publicize solicitations. Conduct industry briefings, site visits, and pre-proposal conferences; respond to inquiries relating to acquisitions; and control the distribution of solicitations to offerors.
- Analyze quotes, bids, and proposals. Conduct comprehensive evaluations of all business aspects of offerors, oversee mission suitability (technical) evaluations, recommend determinations as to competitive range and non-responsive offers, conduct preaward surveys and hold discussions with offerors in the competitive range. Recommend contractor selection. Assist and advise source selection officials in identifying and justifying negotiations with, or award of, a specific offeror or offerors. Consult with unsuccessful offerors, determine offeror responsibility, and prepare all procurement documentation relating to bid protests.
- Serve as lead negotiator. Plan the negotiation strategy, coordinate that strategy with the negotiation team and lead negotiations with the contractor. Make all trade-offs necessary to arrive at sound acquisitions at fair and reasonable prices; prepare all pre-negotiation positions, post-negotiation summaries and contractual documents necessary for award; and may take full responsibility for certain assigned actions by signing them as the Contracting Officer.

- Perform contract administration functions. Oversee the activities of the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative, the Government agencies to which administrative functions have been delegated, and the contractors; allow or disallow incurred costs; determine claims, withholding, and liquidated damage amounts; resolve performance problems and disputes; approve requests for property, travel and rebudgeting; negotiate changes, subcontracting plans, unpriced options, terminations for default and convenience and other modifications; analyze performance, financial, property and other reports; and perform all other post award functions necessary to ensure proper contractor performance.
- Train junior negotiators and program office personnel involved in generating requirements. Resolve organizational conflicts of interest, answer congressional inquiries, represent the Division on intra- and extra-mural committees, and perform special assignments as necessary for complete staff work on assigned procurements.

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Level III–Advanced Level
GS-1102-13 and above

Career Path

Education Required:

Bachelor's degree including or supplemented by 24 semester hours in any combination of the following fields: accounting, business, finance, law, contracts, purchasing, economics, industrial management, marketing, quantitative methods, or organization and management.

Objective:

To continue the enhancement of skills identified in the entry level and intermediate levels of acquisition career management and to develop the individual's management and leadership skills. Training and development courses, assignments, and voluntary activities should be documented in an individual development plan (IDP) using short term goals of 1 year and long term goals of up to 5 years (to be determined by employee and supervisor).

Training:

Mandatory Courses:

Executive Contracting (CON 301)

Recommended Courses:

Advanced Contract Pricing (CON 204)

Facilitation training

Source selection

Appropriation law

Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act

Past performance

Service Contract Act

Protests

Related college business courses

Leadership and teambuilding
Writing skills
Computer applications (including spreadsheets)
Project management
Presentation skills
Decision-making
Managing change
Customer focus
Alternative dispute resolution
Analytical skills
Problem solving

On-the-Job Training Activities:

Respond to congressional issues
Serve on panels outside DOC
Lead and/or participate in interagency committees
Plan and/or conduct conferences

Rotational Assignments:

Serve on source selection boards
Serve on career management panels
Be team leader on special projects
Work with cross-functional teams on special issues
Serve on panels outside DOC
Plan and/or conduct conferences
Serve in other offices within Commerce or other Civilian agencies

Other Recommended Activities (Voluntary):

Serve as role model or mentor
Conduct training sessions on particular topics
Write and publish articles for in-house newsletter and/or professional magazines
Attend conferences, workshops, and seminars
Be a speaker at other agencies' conferences
Be a member of a panel on special acquisition subjects